

VZCZCXR09310
RR RUEHDU RUEHMR RUEHRN
DE RUEHSA #2576/01 3301524
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 251524Z NOV 08
FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 6529
INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE
RUEHTN/AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN 6303
RUEHDU/AMCONSUL DURBAN 0441
RUEHSA/AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG 8653
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PRETORIA 002576

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/24/2018

TAGS: KJUS PGOV KDEM SF

SUBJECT: ANC USING MULTIPLE MEANS TO STALL OPPPOSITION

PRETORIA 00002576 001.2 OF 003

Classified By: Political Counselor Raymond L. Brown for Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

Summary

¶11. (C) The African National Congress (ANC) is undertaking several steps to stall the opposition ahead of the election next year. Although the ANC's efforts to maintain its two-thirds majority in Parliament appear organized and extensive, there are few signs of a coherent strategy for countering dissidents or for preparing for a potential loss of support. Instead, the ANC looks off-balance and reactionary for a party that has dominated the political scene for 15 years. The ANC is using the setting of an election date as a way to throw off the opposition, delaying the release of its party lists to keep members from defecting, disrupting opposition rallies to intimidate potential supporters, accusing the state-run media with favoring the opposition, and challenging the new party formed by Mosiuoa Lekota and Mbhazima "Sam" Shilowa in court to delay the opposition party's ability to garner support. These efforts are unlikely to guarantee the ANC's two-thirds electoral majority, but if successful will make it that much harder for the opposition to pose a strong challenge to the ruling party. End Summary.

Efforts to Stall Opposition Far-Reaching

¶12. (C) The ANC is using the setting of an election date as a way to throw off the opposition. Senior ANC officials at first raised the possibility of moving the election forward from the April to June timeframe, but then denied having such conversations. Cape Times reporter Christine Terreblanche on November 19 reported that the ANC would ratify a proposal for an early election -- which would have voting on March 25 -- when the national executive (NEC) met on November 22. Terreblanche said the ANC's national working committee, the party's second most important decision-making body, decided on November 17 to recommend early voting. The ANC subsequently discussed the election date at the NEC meeting on November 22 and recommended holding the election either March 25 or June 6. Terreblanche noted that the move for an early election, although legal, would be taken to undercut support for the Congress of the People (COPE). ANC national officials have said publicly that the "ANC has not taken a decision on a date." The ruling party has issued statements noting that it was engaged in "internal discussions" on possible election dates while pointing out that it was up to

President Kgalema Motlanthe to set the date in consultation with the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC). By keeping the election date speculation running, the ANC effectively makes it difficult for the opposition to create campaign goals and to plan for the short and longer terms.

¶3. (C) The ANC is delaying the release of its party lists to keep members from defecting to COPE. The ANC in past elections drew up party lists well ahead of the election date. This year pundits and political analysts say the ruling party is delaying the release of such lists in an effort to keep members from defecting to COPE. University of Witswatersrand professor Roger Southall, author of the critically acclaimed series "State of the Nation," told Poloff in a November 19 meeting that the longer the ANC delays the list process, the better chance it has of crippling COPE and avoiding any more embarrassing defections.

The ANC probably is particularly concerned about losing support among the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) once the list process moves forward. The "Mail and Guardian" reported on November 23 that members of the tripartite alliance "will have to persuade ANC branches that their members should be included as public representatives in the provincial and national legislatures." The ANC has made it clear that it wants SACP and COSATU support, but has said "there will be no reserved seats for any organization within or outside the alliance on the lists ..." Sooner or later the ANC has to take the painful step of releasing the lists so voters know who will be deployed where. Reports that the ANC is finally undertaking efforts to prepare party lists are starting to surface as Business Day senior political reporter Karima Brown noted on November 24 that Jacob Zuma is at the top of the ANC's party lists being circulated to Gauteng's 356

PRETORIA 00002576 002.2 OF 003

branches. However, once party lists are finalized, there is the risk that the ANC will lose membership support.

¶4. (C) The ANC is disrupting opposition rallies to intimidate potential supporters of COPE. The ruling party since the creation of COPE in October has disrupted several rallies and press conferences. The ANC reportedly bussed supporters to Orange Farm in Gauteng Province to disrupt a COPE rally in late October. ANC Youth League supporters disrupted a press conference held by Shilowa at the University of Johannesburg on October 27. Senior ANC officials warned supporters to stay away from the national convention organized by Shilowa and Lekota, an order for which there was compliance. However, following the convention there have been reports that ANC supporters disrupted rallies in Heidedal in the Free State and Verulam in Durban. ANC President Jacob Zuma has ordered supporters of the party to allow COPE to campaign in peace, but has done little to discipline those who disobeyed the edict. On November 18, ANC Youth League President Julius Malema publicly contradicted Zuma by denying that he or his yellow youth league members had been told by party leaders to tone down their controversial rhetoric. Malema told Cape Talk radio that "so far nobody has ever raised any issue, none whatsoever with us on any utterance, on any position we have taken." Malema's remark directly countered what Zuma has told the press, namely that "(party leaders) are talking to the young man Malema." Southall told Poloff that "such protests or counter-protests present a danger in the run-up to the election." He said, "It's not the level (of political tolerance) we had hoped for. It is interesting that after the 1994 elections, the assumption was that the political situation in South Africa was normalizing democracy." He also noted that condemnation of hate speech and intolerance by political leaders and the IEC has been "inadequate." (Note: The newly appointed Safety and Security Minister this week reversed a decision that would have prevented Lekota from keeping his bodyguards. Many pundits and political analysts saw the move by the government to force Lekota to

give up bodyguards as a way for the ANC to intimidate COPE's leadership. End Note).

15. (C) The ANC is accusing the state-run South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) with favoring the opposition. The ANC this week accused the SABC of broadcasting images of Zuma dancing or singing rather than giving speeches or announcing policies. The ruling party on November 18 accused SABC of giving COPE more air time than the ANC. The party claimed the SABC was allowing COPE to "raise its profile and gain the upperhand over the ANC." The ANC asked the SABC to "resist temptation" in its coverage of political events. The SABC, in addition to publishing a three-page newspaper advertisement promising fair coverage, met with all parties contesting the election to "do its utmost best to ensure that the elections are covered in a fair, balanced, and impartial manner." SABC executives have also noted analysis of their content that clearly shows the ANC receives the lion's share of national television coverage. Freedom Front Plus leader Pieter Mulder this week suggested that the ruling party was feeling the heat generated by the emergence of COPE and wants to ensure its pre-eminent place among all parties in the country.

16. (C) The ANC is seeking to challenge COPE in court to delay the opposition party's ability to bolster support. The ANC has challenged the validity of COPE's name with the IEC and in the courts and charged it is an ANC "brand" that they do not cede for use by the new party. The ANC earlier in the week served a letter of demand on COPE "objecting to the use and registration of the name." COPE's lawyers rejected the ANC's claims, but the ruling party announced it would "proceed with a High Court application seeking an urgent interdict to prevent the use of this name" and further asking the courts to order COPE to deliver all documents, t-shirts, and other paraphernalia to the ANC for destruction. Prominent political analyst and author of The ANC Underground, Raymond Suttner told Poloff that "no one has a patent on South Africa's freedom struggle. Moreover, the ANC's proprietary statements on this matter run counter to the conception of the congress itself, which was devised as a mass campaign that led to the creation of the Freedom Charter." The IEC has said it will leave the legal matter to the courts, but any case in the judicial system would take time away from COPE's campaigning ability and its ability to generate name recognition among rural voters. The most immediate effect of a name challenge would be to hinder

PRETORIA 00002576 003.2 OF 003

COPE's ability to compete in the 55 by-elections in Western Cape, Northern Cape, and the Free State on December 10.

Comment

17. (C) The ANC's efforts to stall the opposition and to maintain its two-thirds majority in Parliament appear organized and extensive, but there are few signs of a coherent strategy for countering dissidents or for preparing for a potential loss of support. The ANC looks off-balance and reactionary for a party that has dominated the political scene for 15 years. Party leaders have stopped saying people are free to leave the party and "good riddance" as the number of defectors continues to grow. The ANC is now asking legislators to "please" stay with the party and is promising jobs and diplomatic postings as inducements. It is still too early to tell whether the efforts to stall the opposition will help the ANC clinch a two-thirds majority in the election next year. However, if the ANC achieves certain outcomes from its actions -- an earlier election date, a list process that maintains broad ANC, SACP, and COSATU support, a fearful political opposition, an SABC that portrays the ANC in a positive light, and a lengthy court battle -- the opposition probably will have more difficulty posing a strong

challenge to the ruling party.
BOST